Couple Recovery
Development Approach: A Research-Based Systemic Approach to Recovery

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Addiction in Relationships

Compared with couples without alcoholism:

- Separation & divorce rates are 4-7 times higher than in the general population
- Higher levels of distress and reported problems
- Higher levels of anger, hostility and negativity
- Decreased satisfaction in relationship
- Trouble with: boundaries, adaptability, feeling distant, communication, decision making, financial strain, parenting, and increased conflict
Family Recovery Project (FRP)

- Sponsored by Mental Research Institute (MRI) in Palo Alto, California, the FRP began in 1989
- Co-directors Stephanie Brown, Ph.D. and Virginia Lewis, Ph.D., sought to determine normal long-term recovery processes in family/couple relationship
- Three research components: a) Family Research Project; b) Curriculum Development, Maintaining Abstinence Program (MAPS); and c) Couples Focus Group
Long-Term Recovery Study
Humphreys, Moos, & Cohen, 1997. J. of Studies on Alcohol, 58,(3) 231-238

- Short-term interventions have little long-term impact
- At the 8-year follow-up family relationship quality appears most predictive of remission
- Outpatient sessions sought in the first 3 years increased likelihood of remission at the 8 year mark
- AA participation in first 3 years increased likelihood of remission at 8 years
Bio-Psycho-Social-Spiritual-Cultural Model of Addiction

- Addiction as a brain disorder
- Dopamine hypotheses
- Genetic predisposition
- 89 genes are linked to addiction
  - Four fold higher incidence of alcoholism with positive history of alcoholism in family than in families without alcoholism than first-degree relatives of non-alcoholics
  - An estimated 25% - 50% lifetime risk among sons and brothers of severely alcoholic men
A ROADMAP FOR THE JOURNEY
A GOTTMAN WORKSHOP FOR COUPLES EMBRACING RECOVERY

Designed by:
Dr. Robert Navarra, MFT, MAC

In collaboration with
Drs. John and Julie Gottman and the Gottman Institute

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Welcome

This research-based workshop is designed to help couples with the challenges of recovery from a relationship perspective.
I’m right there in the room, and no one even acknowledges me."
The Way Out: RECOVERY

**Individual Recovery**

**Couple Recovery**

- Often, treatment approaches neglect the couple relationship encouraging separate individual work only.
- A relational approach considers three recoveries: each partner’s recovery and the relationship.
Addiction is Treatable

Recovery Works

Recent Data Show:

- Over 23.5 million people who identified have addiction problems now report being problem free.
- The 5 year mark of recovery is a “point of durability”, less than 15% relapse.
Healing Takes Time and Effort

It’s normal to struggle after recovery

The first year of recovery is crucial
- The couple is entering new territory
- It’s unclear how to now do things
- Old feelings mix with new feelings. This is normal
What is the best path to take now?

- How do I manage my relationship?
- What happens next?
- How do we handle things?
- What do I need?
- How do I take care of me?
- What do I feel?
Couples Need A Roadmap
Based on:

- The Couple Recovery Development Approach, developed by Dr. Bob Navarra
- The Sound Relationship House Model, developed by Drs. John Gottman & Julie Gottman

AND

Bringing the Models Together
Couple Recovery Goals

1. Begin to develop a recovery for the couple that also supports individual recovery
2. Learn ways to manage emotions and change the way you handle conflict
3. Work on boundaries and what healthy relationships need
4. Learn to talk about addiction and recovery without blame
5. Talk about goals for the future
Couple Recovery Development Approach

Shifting

Intergenerational Reworking

Attending

Time together and in recovery

Unique Characteristics

Life Cycle
Couple Recovery Development Approach

1. **Shifting**: Couples begin shifting away from the idea of approaching recovery as individuals to now include relationship recovery as an important part of individual recovery.

2. **Intergenerational Reworking**: Couples begin to integrate a clearer understanding of the impact their families of origin have had on their own development as individuals and as partners in a couple relationship.

3. **Attending**: Couples are able to attend to both the relationship and to their own individual needs. These are not mutually exclusive, which is often the case in active addiction.
The Sound Relationship House

Create Shared Meaning

Make Life Dreams Come True

Manage Conflict
- Accept Your Partner's Influence
- Dialogue About Problems
- Practice Self-Soothing

The Positive Perspective
- Turn Towards Instead of Away
- Share Fondness and Admiration

Build Love Maps
- Know One Another's World
Secondhand Effects from Addiction

- Refers to the harmful impact of addiction on society, family and significant others.
- In an international analysis, the damage from alcohol world-wide is second only to tobacco.
- Addiction treatment for significant others may overlook secondhand addiction and focus only on “codependency.”
Living with active addiction is a balancing act affecting every part of the co-addict’s life. The harmful effects of this disease are not automatically a sign of codependency or of pathology. Secondhand addiction is associated with feelings of trauma, depression, anger and stress.
Defining Codependency:

Behaviors like:

1. **Manipulating and assuming responsibility** for another’s problem use
2. **Enabling** continued drinking by protecting the other from the negative consequences of problematic use
3. **Minimizing and Ignoring** one’s own needs
4. **Avoiding and discounting** feelings
5. **Low self-esteem** related to perfectionism - often because of a history of being criticized and blamed
Antidote: Remember the “Three C’s”

1. You didn’t **Cause** it.
2. You can’t **Control** it.
3. You can’t **Cure** it.

Otherwise: It feels like carrying the weight of the world.
Defining Interdependency in Relationships

Focus includes self-care and relationship care

- A relationship where needs can be expressed and responded to without sacrificing one’s own health or well-being in the process
- Expectations include accountability to the partner and relationship between dependency with independence

Concern for each other’s welfare and recovery

- Considering the long-term goals for the relationship
Codependency vs Interdependency

Are found in the differences in three different ways to manage and communicate reactions to your partner’s behaviors, and emotions
Three Responses

- Taking Control → Codependent
- Expressing Concern → Interdependent
- Offering Support → Interdependent
Roadmap for the Journey

Day 1: A Recovery Path for Couples

- When Conversations Get Overwhelming
- Build Recovery Maps: Mine, Yours, Ours
- CPR for Our Recovery
- Develop New Rituals

Developing A Couple Recovery
Roadmap for the Journey

**Day 2: Healing from Addiction**

**Managing Repair**

- Aftermath of a Regrettable Incident
- Family of Origin Filters
- HEART – Healing Emotions from Addiction Recovery & Trauma
- Creating Vision
Success is a journey, not a destination

Ben Sweetland